

In Bipartisan Letter, Members Argue Great Lakes are an Economic Driver for 30 Million Americans

WASHINGTON - Reps. Louise Slaughter (NY-28), John Dingell (MI-15) and Sander Levin (MI-12) today urged House Appropriators to sustain funding for programs that restore and protect the Great Lakes, an economic driver for northern states and the world's largest source of freshwater.

Slaughter, Dingell and Levin were joined by 22 colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, in a letter to House Appropriations Committee leaders arguing for the sustained funding of the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(GLRI\)](#), a multi-agency program designed to restore the Great Lakes and provide critical funding to programs that clean up contaminated sediments, improve water quality, combat invasive species, protect watersheds from polluted run-off, and restore wetlands and other valuable habitats in the Great Lakes.

In part, they say, "The lakes provide invaluable recreational opportunities and support shipping, fishing, boating and tourism industries that generate 1.5 million jobs and \$62 billion in wages. Restoring the Great Lakes advances our regional strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in freshwater resources and waterfront communities."

The full text of the letter is included below.

"The Great Lakes represent 20 percent of the world's fresh water supply, and it is about time we put some serious effort into restoring and protecting them if only because they allow shipping, fishing, boating, and tourism creating and sustaining local jobs," said Rep. Slaughter, Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Task Force. "I appreciate that budget resources are tight, but as one of 30 million Americans who live in the Great Lakes basin, we understand that it is our responsibility to take of them and pass them on to future generations."

"Our country is trying to get back to solid footing, not only financially, but economically and environmentally," said Rep. Dingell. "I understand that we are facing difficult choices and cuts

have to be made as we begin these efforts. However, I ask for the sustainment of funding for the Great Lakes. The vitality of these waters are essential to the region and to the nation – they are a treasure that must be restored and protected. We must not let our efforts to protect the Great Lakes diminish. The bottom line is that it takes money to keep up the good work and I ask that they not be forgotten in next year's budget."

"Michigan has a huge stake in the health of the Great Lakes," said Rep. Levin. "We're sending this letter to the Appropriations Committee to underscore that funding for Great Lakes restoration needs to be a priority as they complete the 2012 spending bills."

In July, when the House considered the FY 2012 Interior-Environment funding bill, a bipartisan majority of House members supported an amendment by Rep. LaTourette to increase funding for the GLRI to \$300 million, still \$50 million below President Obama's request.

The Great Lakes are the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth and support shipping, fishing, boating, and tourism industries that generate 1.5 million jobs. The Great Lakes provide drinking water, transportation, and recreational opportunities to the 30 million citizens who live within the Great Lakes Basin.

Full Copy of Letter

November 1, 2011

Dear Chairman Rogers and Simpson and Ranking Members Dicks and Moran:

As Members of Congress who support investment in the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes region, we respectfully request that you include sustained funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative as you finalize the Fiscal Year 2012 Interior-Environment

Appropriations bill.

The Great Lakes are the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth and hold 90 percent of our nation's supply of fresh surface water. The lakes provide invaluable recreational opportunities and support shipping, fishing, boating and tourism industries that generate 1.5 million jobs and \$62 billion in wages. Restoring the Great Lakes advances our regional strategy to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in freshwater resources and waterfront communities.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is the largest investment in the Great Lakes in two decades and provides critical funding to programs that clean up contaminated sediments, improve water quality, combat invasive species, protect watersheds from polluted run-off, and restore wetlands and other valuable habitats in the Great Lakes. The GLRI is supporting implementation of a comprehensive, bipartisan restoration strategy that is broadly endorsed by the Great Lakes states, cities, tribes, conservation groups, and business and industry.

We realize that budget resources are tight this year; however, we urge you to make Great Lakes restoration a funding priority. During the recent consideration of the Interior-Environment funding bill in the House, a bipartisan majority of House members supported the LaTourette amendment to increase funding for the GLRI to \$300 million, which is still \$50 million below the President's request for this program.

Sustained funding for the GLRI in Fiscal Year 2012 will encourage continued investments and help ensure the success of this important restoration program. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sander Levin

Louise Slaughter

John Dingell

John Conyers

Hansen Clarke

Dale Kildee

Gwen Moore

Brian Higgins

Robert Dold

Janice Schakowsky

Dennis Kucinich

Marcia Fudge

Tim Ryan

Charles Rangel

Gary Peters

Danny Davis

Mike Quigley

Jesse Jackson

Sean Duffy

Bill Owens

Betty Sutton

Kathleen Hochul

Daniel Lipinski

Paul Tonko

Luis Gutiérrez